



Bundeswehr Cross of Honor for valor: Soldiers of the 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation



COURTESY PHOTO

The Soldiers of the 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade who were presented the German Bundeswehr Cross of Honor for Valor for helping rescue German Soldiers trapped by a Taliban ambush near Kunduz, Afghanistan April 2, 2010 (left to right): Chief Warrant Officer 3 Nelson Visaya, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jason Brown, Sgt. Antonio Gattis, Staff Sgt. Travis Brown, Spc. Matthew Baker, Sgt. Steven Shumaker, Sgt. William Ebel, Spc. Todd Marchese, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Steven Husted, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason LaCrosse, Capt. Robert McDonough, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Sean Johnson. Not pictured: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Eric Wells and Spc. Gregory Martinez.

Bundeswehr honors U.S. Army Europe aviators for Afghanistan valor

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KUNDUZ, Afghanistan (May 12, 2010) -- Fourteen American Soldiers made history today by becoming the first foreigners to receive Germany's Ehrenkreuz der Bundeswehr für Tapferkeit – Bundeswehr Cross of Honor for Bravery -- one of the nation's highest



BUNDESWEHR PHOTO BY KAI-AXEL DÖPKE

German Federal President Horst Köhler approved the Bundeswehr Cross of Honour for Valour award in 2008. The medal represented a new level of the awards of honour of the Bundeswehr, the existing levels being the Medal of Honour, the Bronze Cross of Honour, the Silver Cross of Honour and the Gold Cross of Honour. With this award, Soldiers can be shown appreciation for acts committed in the performance of their duties that are far in excess of the bravery expected. At first glance it is similar to the Gold Cross of Honour, but has a double oak leaf cluster on the ribbon rack. This also decorates the service ribbon to which the cross is attached. The award for acts of bravery can be presented without the soldier having to have completed a minimum period of service, unlike the general practice for the existing Crosses of Honour.

(Source: German Federal Ministry of Defense website)

For more information on the Bundeswehr and its awards, go to www.bmvg.de.

awards for valor. The American troops are all members of the 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade.

The U.S. Army Europe medical evacuation crewmen were honored for risking their lives to come to the rescue of German soldiers who were ambushed by as many as 200 Taliban fighters during a patrol in western Afghanistan north of Kunduz, April 2.

German Lt. Gen. Bruno Kasdorf, chief of staff of the International Security Assistance Force, presented the medals during a ceremony here, less than 10 kilometers from where the firefight took place.

The battle was still raging when the U.S. Black Hawk MEDEVAC helicopters arrived on the scene.

“We came under very heavy fire,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason LaCrosse. “We couldn’t land at first, but we came back in a second time and loaded two casualties, brought them back to the hospital, then we went back to get more.”

Eleven German soldiers were critically wounded in the fighting, and three died from their wounds. The others survived, thanks to the 5-158th troops.

“We’ve had a strong partnership with the German soldiers. These guys are like family to us, so we took it personally when they got injured and just went out there and did what we had to do,” said Sgt. Antonio Gattis.



Images of the medal ceremony are available on the 12th CAB Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/12cab_images.

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